

THE CLAIMS

The listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application.

Listing of Claims

1. (Previously Presented) A controller comprising:

a receiving unit for receiving a mail transmitted from a management unit via a communication network;

an analyzing unit for analyzing the received mail to obtain data on an expiration date and time; and

a control unit for controlling an apparatus based on the received mail when the validity of the mail has not expired.

2. (Original) A controller as claimed in claim 1, wherein the apparatus is a copying machine.

3. (Original) A controller as claimed in claim 1, wherein the mail is transmitted in packets.

4. (Original) A management system comprising:
an apparatus;

a management unit being connected to the apparatus via a network and for transmitting data for managing the apparatus; and

a control unit being connected between the management unit and the apparatus for determining whether the validity of data transmitted from the management unit has expired or not, and for permitting transmission of data whose validity has not expired to the apparatus.

5. (Original) A management system as claimed in claim 4, wherein the apparatus is a copying machine.

6. (Original) A management system as claimed in claim 4, wherein the network is the Internet.

7. (Original) A management system as claimed in claim 4, wherein the management unit transmits data in packets.

8. (Currently Amended) A control ~~unit~~ device in which apparatus management data is transmitted and received to and from an apparatus by a first communicating-means unit, and a packet addressed to a centralized management ~~unit~~ device is sent out to a communication network and a packet from the communication network addressed to itself is taken in by a second communicating-means unit, said control-~~unit~~ device comprising:

a clock means for providing current time;

an analyzing-means unit for analyzing the packet taken in by said second communicating ~~means~~ unit; and

an expiration date and time managing-~~means~~ unit for permitting transmission of the apparatus management data included in the packet to said apparatus on condition that the current time obtained from said clock-~~means~~ is not past an expiration date and time of the packet analyzed by said analyzing-~~means~~ unit.

9. (Currently Amended) A control-~~unit~~ device as claimed in claim 8, wherein when the current time obtained from said clock-~~means~~ is past the expiration date and time of the packet analyzed by said analyzing-~~means~~ unit, said expiration date and time managing-~~means~~ unit transmits a packet including data representing that the current date and time is past the expiration date and time to the communication network by said second communicating-~~means~~ unit.

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10. (Currently Amended) A control-~~unit~~ device as claimed in claim 8, wherein said communication network is the Internet.

11. (Currently Amended) A control-~~unit~~ device as claimed in claim 8, further comprising a threshold value storing-~~means~~ unit for holding threshold value information deciding a period for which the apparatus management data is valid,

wherein said expiration date and time managing-~~means~~ unit determines whether or not the current time is not past the expiration date and time based on a transmission date and time included in the packet analyzed by said analyzing-~~means~~ unit, the threshold value information held by the threshold value storing-~~means~~ unit and the current time obtained from said clock ~~means~~.

12. (Currently Amended) A control-~~unit~~ device as claimed in claim 11, wherein said threshold value storing ~~means~~ unit holds threshold value information deciding an expiration date and time of each apparatus management data.

13. (Currently Amended) A control-~~unit~~ device as claimed in claim 8, wherein said expiration date and time managing-~~means~~ device determines whether or not the current time is not past the expiration date and time based on expiration date and time information included in the packet analyzed by said analyzing-~~means~~ unit and the current time obtained from said clock ~~means~~.

B 14. (Currently Amended) A management system that manages apparatuses connected to a plurality of apparatus management-~~units~~ devices by transmitting and receiving a packet including apparatus management data between a centralized management-~~unit~~ device and the apparatus management-~~units~~ devices via a communication network,

wherein said centralized management-~~unit~~ device comprises:

an expiration date and time setting-~~means~~ unit for setting expiration date and time information of the apparatus management data; and

a communication network for sending out a packet being addressed to a specified apparatus management-~~unit~~ device and including the expiration date and time information to the communication network, and taking in a packet from the communication network addressed to itself, and

wherein each of said plurality of apparatus management-~~units~~ devices [[each]] comprises:

a first communicating-~~means~~ device for transmitting and receiving the apparatus management data to and from the apparatus;

a second communicating-~~means~~ device for sending out a packet addressed to said centralized management-~~unit~~ device to the communication network, and taking in a packet from the communication network addressed to itself;

a clock-~~means~~ for providing current time;

an analyzing-~~means~~ unit for analyzing the packet taken in by said second communicating ~~means~~ device; and

B (a expiration date and time managing-~~means~~ unit for permitting transmission of the apparatus management data included in the packet to the apparatus connected to said apparatus management-~~unit~~ device on condition that the current time obtained from said clock-~~means~~ is not past an expiration date and time represented by the expiration date and time information included in the packet analyzed by said analyzing-~~means~~ unit.

15. (Currently Amended) A management system that manages apparatuses connected to a plurality of apparatus management-~~units~~ devices by transmitting and receiving a packet including apparatus management data between a centralized management-~~unit~~ device and the apparatus management-~~units~~ devices via a communication network,

wherein said centralized management-~~unit~~ device comprises:

an expiration data and time setting-~~means~~ unit for setting expiration date and time information of the apparatus management data; and

a communication network for sending out to the communication network a packet being addressed to a specified apparatus management-~~unit~~ device and including expiration date and

time information from the expiration date and time setting—~~means~~ unit, and taking in a packet from the communication network addressed to itself, and

wherein each of said plurality of apparatus management—~~units~~ devices [[each]] comprises:

a first communicating—~~means~~ unit for transmitting and receiving the apparatus management data to and from the apparatus;

a second communicating—~~means~~ unit for sending out a packet addressed to said centralized management—~~unit~~ device to the communication network, and taking in a packet from the communication network addressed to itself;

a clock—~~means~~ for providing current time;

an analyzing—~~means~~ unit for analyzing the packet taken in by said second communicating ~~means~~ unit;

a threshold value storing—~~means~~ unit for holding threshold value information deciding a period for which the apparatus management data is valid: and

an expiration date and time managing—~~means~~ unit for permitting transmission of the apparatus management data included in the packet to the apparatus connected to said apparatus management—~~unit~~ device on condition that the current time obtained from said clock—~~means~~ is not past an expiration date and time obtained from transmission date and time information included in the packet analyzed by said analyzing—~~means~~ unit and the threshold value information held by said threshold value storing—~~means~~ unit.

16. (Previously Presented) A controlling method comprising the steps of:

receiving a mail transmitted from a management unit via a communication network;

analyzing the received mail to obtain data on an expiration date and time; and

controlling an apparatus based on the received mail when the validity of the mail has not expired.

17. (New) A controller as claimed in claim 1, wherein the mail is a command to change a setting condition of the apparatus or a command to request an operation of the apparatus.

18. (New) A controller as claimed in claim 1, wherein the controlling unit does not control the apparatus based on the received mail when the validity of the mail has expired.

B 19. (New) A control device for controlling an "image forming" apparatus comprising:
a receiving unit which receives a command from a management device via a communication network;

a decision unit which decides whether or not the validity of the command has expired;

a control unit which sends the command to the image forming apparatus so that the image forming apparatus performs the command when the decision unit decides that the validity of the command has not expired.

20. (New) A control device as claimed in claim 19, wherein the control unit sends information to the management device via the communication network when the decision unit decides that the validity of the command has expired.

21. (New) A control device as claimed in claim 19, wherein the control unit does not control the management device based on the command when the decision unit decides that the validity of the command has expired.

22. (New) A control device as claimed in claim 19, wherein the command is a command to change a setting condition of the image forming apparatus or a command to request an operation of the image forming apparatus.
